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Mental Gurus: An Artificial Intelligence Solution for our Mental Health Crisis

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By Bridger Jensen, Founder, <u>Mental Gurus</u>.

What good is our modern technology if we can't use it to improve ourselves? As we become increasingly aware of our universe and greater technologies, we must continue to ask the quintessential questions: Are we truly alleviating human suffering? Are we happier?

How Pervasive is our Mental Health Crisis?

Before I jump into our tech solutions, let's examine the problematic area <u>MentalGurus.com</u> is addressing. Today depression, ADHD, anxiety disorders, addiction and other mental health disorders cumulate to create the largest cause of disability worldwide. Here are a few stats taken from the National Institute of Mental Health:

- There are 1,400,000 suicide attempts in the United States every year - approximately the same amount of heart attacks happen in the USA every year.

- In 2017 over 47,000 died by suicide in the United States.

- Approximately 1 in 5 Americans (18.5%) use a prescribed psychotropic medication.

- Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. (46.6 million) experiences mental illness in a given year.

- 58.5% of Americans will suffer through a diagnosable mental health

disorder at some point in their lives.

- Approximately 1 in 5 youth aged 13–18 (21.4%) experiences a severe mental disorder at some point during their life. For children aged 8–15, the estimate is 13%.

- 6.9% of adults in the U.S.—16 million—had at least one major depressive episode in the past year.

- Among the 20.2 million adults in the U.S. who experienced a substance use disorder, 50.5%—10.2 million adults—had a co-occurring mental illness, meaning that mental health disorders are likely the root of ½ the addiction behaviors in our nation.

- By 2050, the cumulative economic output associated with mental health is estimated to be at 16 trillion dollars - nearly our national GDP.

- Programmatic Display Ads just for psychotropic medications alone will account for $56 billion in 2019.

However alarming the above is, the scary part is how fast the statistics are rising. The demand for mental health services continues to rise culturally too. This is partly due to the threshold for what constitutes need for services, and the stigma of receiving services is decreasing rapidly. However, on the rise is awareness of mental health needs and diagnosis, and our standard of living. Suffice it to say that it's a big problem when any nation has three times as many suicides as they do McDonalds (I make the comparison because I bet you pass a lot of how Mcdonalds as you travel). I can talk all day about why this is, but I'll have to save that for another article when I can share the results of our AI's findings with you.

Mental Healthcare has been sluggish to Adapt to Technology

Compounding the mental health crisis and the world's increased demand for psychotherapeutic services is the failure of the mental health profession to adapt and utilize modern technology. I'm not pointing fingers here, It is absolutely worth noting (and applauding) the tremendous efforts of wonderful software organizations that have been collecting essential data such as Outcomes Tools®, Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Council, the National Institute of Mental Health (who regularly funds grants for innovators in this sector), HDAA, and several others I don't have room to mention. Organizations like the National Association of Therapeutic Schools and Programs have been pushing for years to have better outcome tracking through electronic systems.

But despite the best efforts, and years of opportunity mental healthcare has yet to utilize technological innovation to advance the field by leaps and bounds. During my psychotherapeutic graduate coursework, professors explained to my cohort and I that the profession of psychotherapy would be less disrupted by technology than many other professions. Computers just couldn't handle our socially-impactful work. Our profession was safe from the turmoil that technology had wrought on so many other professions. While some minimal changes have occured in communication (ie video conferencing therapy), technology has not been disruptive to psychotherapy methodology.

So far they've been right. Technology hasn't changed psychotherapy, at least not in the way it has been disruptive to other fields such as travel agents, video rental stores, & taxi drivers. Certainly technology has affected the way we chart our notes, market our clinics, meet with our clients, and research our therapeutic methods.

There are reasons psychotherapy has been sluggish to adapt, especially in regarding of outcomes and recommending clinical treatment methods. A paper from the National Library of Medicine said it well.

> **There are three key reasons for this lag: 1. lack of a sufficient evidence base through which to develop specific, valid and clearly defined measures, 2 inadequate infrastructure to develop and implement quality measures and capture elements of mental health services, and lack of a cohesive strategy to apply mental health quality measurement across different settings in the service of improving care.**

Additionally Mental healthcare has been fragmented, and competitive, and

bound by regulations and a mentality that have not allowed clinicians to freely communicate (but for some good reasons).

So while technology has been miraculous at computing, communication, organizing, and transferring information, software just hasn't been able to keep up with human social skills. And there's no way we're close to AI keeping up with a savvy therapist that can read nonverbal cues, analyze personality, and see subconscious intentions and defenses - right?

Big Change is Coming

Regardless of the reasons for its failure to adapt, the field of psychotherapy is going to be changing - and changing soon. I'm not saying that my licensed colleagues are going to be out of work in 5 or 10 years - not at all. Clinics aren't going anywhere, and neither are any of the time honored traditional methods or psychotropic medications. Mental Health solutions are more in demand than ever, and they are helping people in greater quantity and with greater effectiveness than anytime in history. Mental healthcare spending, awareness, and demand are increasing much faster than most other medical fields. Even the stigma behind getting aid is going down.

But it just isn't enough, not even close. It's easy to stand in the present and think that the big innovations of global networking have been invented. It's so easy to hold your phone and think that we've arrived at a plateau of innovation. We've come so far that we might now think the days of the internet's "wild west" are over. If you argued the point that the low hanging fruit has been harvested, I might even conceded (emphasis on *might*). But to

me, such sentiments are reminiscent of the prospectors in the 1850s, thinking San Francisco's Economic development was doomed after the 1849 gold rush was over. They were wrong. We're not closing the patent office anytime soon. I think we're just at the beginning. In fact I'm sure of it - to think otherwise is just myopic.

Search engines, social networks, online retail, and media (to name a few) have already changed the world, so some people think psychotherapy is escaping unscathed. But then enters artificial intelligence, the self learning software that science fiction has foretold of for decades. Just like in science fictions the AI is made by the tech giants of the world. However unlike the fictions, the AI is used for something progressive, not dumb. They take these powerful AI packages, their machine learning software, their neural networks, and random forest algorithms - and make them free for the world to use.

But without a supercomputer these free AI packages are rather useless. If you want to build a new deep learning artificial intelligence software company you'll need a place for the AI to process massive amounts of data and become smarter and wiser. You need a home for the intelligence to live and learn. So database giants build homes for them (as if on cue), they are very affordable for any startup company through cloud based servers. Todays small companies can innovate, experiment, market test, and utilize them - and my startup company, Mental Gurus, already has begun. We are going to make an impact on the world. This is an exciting time. It is no wonder that huge investments firms are pouring money into small AI companies. One conspicuous example is Softbank Group - which is is investing 55 million in various early stage AI companies, and as of May they have already invested in 18 of them (just this calendar year). NFX (a San-Francisco investment group)

has collected 275m from investors exclusively for AI startups. This and other such momentum toward disruptive AI startups have created a " vacuum for seed-stage companies" according to TechCrunch.

Mental Gurus will Solve Real Problems

Current online solutions to mental health issues are heavily influenced by dated therapeutic methods and professionals that are unappealing or inaccessible to millennials and generation Z. Yes, Gen Z is a thing now and they are already 25% of the population. Millennials and Generation Z are characterized by seeking online peer-to-peer solutions to social issues,

rather than paying for professional solutions. You might think for a second that they don't pay for professionals because they're too young to hire them, but the oldest of the millennial generation is turning 38 this year, and many already have their own teenages. Millennials have all graduated form high school now. They are more resourceful and creative in their mental health solutions too, often looking for alternatives to traditional therapy such as experiential, recreational, and holistic methods. They obviously find their resources online, and less via word of mouth or relationship based referrals. They also prefer Google Docs to Microsoft Office, Tinder to Match, Amazon to WalMart, Snap to Facebook, and even guac toast to eggs and bacon.

I founded Mental Gurus to help more people then I was able to as a therapist. Our original passion for mental health has not faded, but as Mental Gurus grows, we can't help but think even further into the future. Today mentalgurus.com has free psychometric evaluations and reports for all users an amazing service alone. We use the data to inform an AI, that will be making the most advanced and accurate clinical recommendations ever made. AI's need a lot of data to get smart, especially since our ambitions are to close the gap between the demand and the supply. We've spent two years building a trustworthy and reliable India Development team (shout out to them BTW - thank you), and we've recruited skilled data analysts for the creation of our AI (double shoutout to these guys too). Our team is highly communicative and collaborative. Usually people ask me at this point if we are going to have an AI chat bot that acts as a therapist. We see chat bots as the future for some companies, but we envision Mental Gurus as a the hub for all personality and mental health resources, and as a leader for massive amounts of healing and strength building resources. Chat bots are just one of thousands of resources we hope to introduce our users to.

You'll have to pardon our dust as you visit mentalgurus.com. We are still writing our awesome psychometrics, however don't be fooled by our dust- the tools we have are quite evolved. However, what's more exciting are the next phases of our development. Our advanced data scientists are building a deep learning artificial intelligence that will - well let's save that for later. We can't give up all our proprietary knowledge here and now, but what we're building is unique, even in the AI space.

Mental Gurus is a Social Change Movement

Our tagline is "Mental Gurus, the online collective conscious. inspired by you, organized by artificial intelligence. While we believe mental gurus will be massively profitable to investors, that's not what this innovation is about. At our heart we are a social change movement, backed by venture capitalists using psych tech data to make advanced assessment and diagnosis and deliver superior clinical recommendations.

We are going to improve mental healthcare - and we're giving our product away to users for free. It is about our users, who are the gurus of Mental Gurus. We named it Mental Gurus because each user is a guru. Each person that contributes to MentalGurus.com makes the algorithm smarter, each user has so much to offer, and they do so just by participating in the value proposition (and for free). It is based on the philosophy that everyone, however humble, has wisdom to contribute and provide to others. Each person that comes to us with solutions will make our methods more

advanced and elevate our ability to more accurately assist with mental health.

Gurus (our users) will come to us for the psychometrics, stay for the solutions, and return to continue making contributions for others. We'll have the right answers for others, because the gurus will inform our algorithm of what works. Our AI will learn what people need and increase in true wisdom. People will be teaching the machine learning algorithm first hand. Mental Gurus is small, but we're scrappy and dedicated to using massive data to make the world a better place.

Wish us luck as we grow, and please reach out if you have networking opportunities, advice or if you just want to say hi. We are tenacious about making the world a better place with the right connections.

Bridger Jensen began his career in mental healthcare as a field staff in 2002. Since then Bridger has worked diligently in various therapeutic wilderness, adventure, and residential programs. After becoming a licensed clinician, Bridger swiftly built a reputation of excellence, and received therapeutic referrals from across the nation. After 16 years of professional work, Bridger decided to build Mental Gurus and pursue entrepreneurship full time. Mental Gurus has recently launched and has been growing rapidly in the mental health vertical Mental Gurus recently won an award form dot Pitch, and is currently a finalist for Metlife's digital accelerator program, and after a peer reviewed process has been invited to present Mental Gurus at both the InnoSTARS competition and the International Forum on Advancements in Healthcare 2019. Having recently launched, Mental Gurus is currently seeking

seed round investment funding.

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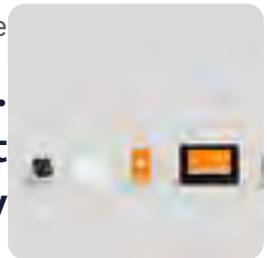
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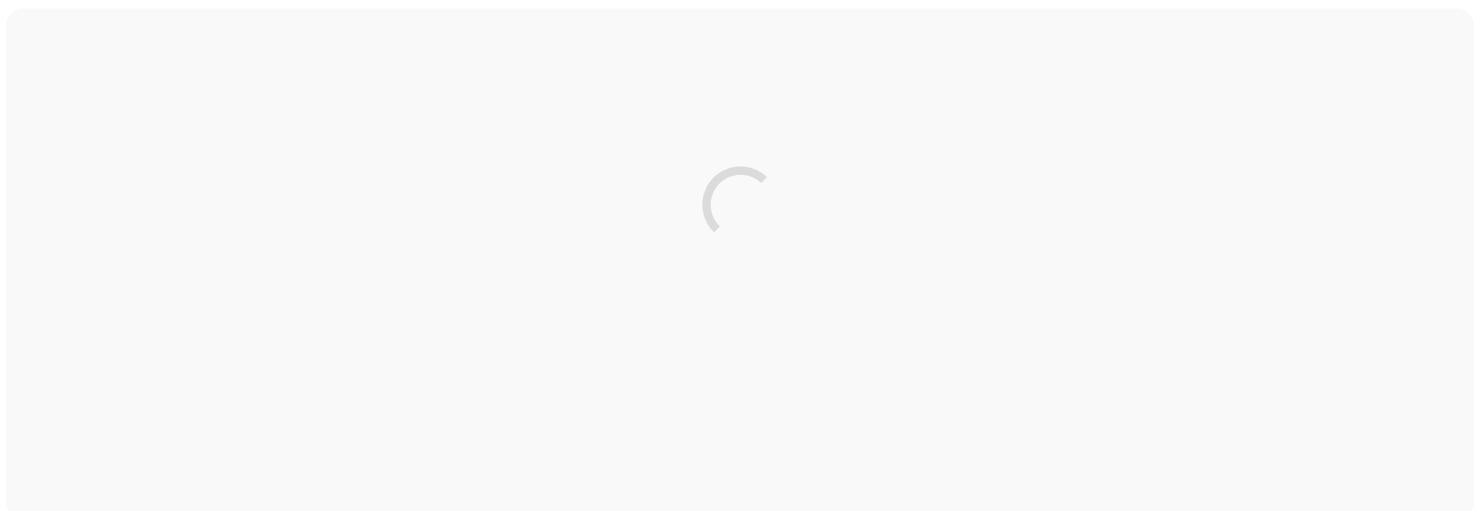
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